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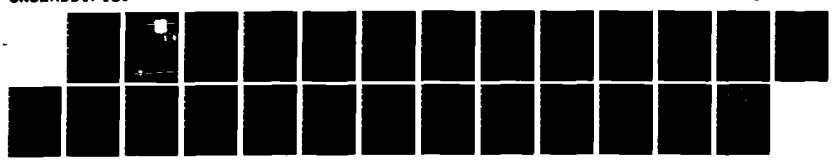

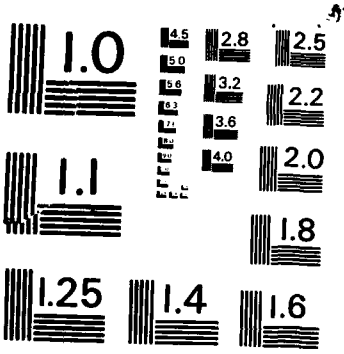

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STUDENT ESSAY

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BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL PAUL [illegible] MORRIS, MP

21 MARCH 1986

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

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The AirLand Battle doctrine places heavy demands on the military police force structure to support the tactical commander. This essay will examine the expected role of the military police in combat with particular emphasis on Enemy Prisoner of War (EPW) operations. History is replete with examples where battlefield resources were diverted to support EPW operations because of the large volume of EPW's and the shortage of military police. Perhaps the realities the 1990's would dictate that the U.S. Army give the Rear Area Combat

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

REAR AREA COMBAT OPERATIONS AND PRISONER OF WAR OPERATIONS: CAN WE DO BOTH?

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

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ABSTRACT

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The Airland Battle doctrine places heavy demands on the military police force structure to support the tactical commander. This essay will examine the expected role of the military police in combat with particular emphasis on Enemy Prisoner of War (EPW) operations. History is replete with examples where battlefield resources were diverted to support EPW operations because of the large volume of EPW's and the shortage of military police. Perhaps the realities the 1990's would dictate that the US Army give the Rear Area Combat Operation responsibility to the light infantry division. This doctrinal change would allow the Military Police Corps to best support the Airland Battle by training for Battlefield Circulation Control and Enemy Prisoner of War missions.

REAR AREA COMBAT OPERATIONS AND PRISONER OF WAR OPERATIONS: CAN WE DO BOTH?

The Airland Battle doctrine places heavy demands on the military police force structure to support the tactical commander. This essay will examine the expected role of the military police in combat with particular emphasis on enemy prisoner of war (EPW) operations. A future war against numerically superior Soviet forces in a European scenario can be expected to produce more EPW's than in previous conflicts. Considering the requirements of the Airland Battle and the potential for significant number of EPW's, the current military police force structure may not meet the challenge.

Historically, large scale EPW operations have placed intolerable demands on the capabilities of friendly forces. Failing to plan for the potential scope of EPW operations will lead to unnecessary competition for badly needed and overly committed manpower and logistics. On the Airland Battlefield, if the commander expects to be successful in his mission, he must be able to use all his resources. Since EPW's represent a threat capable of wearing down our forces, perhaps it is time for the Army to make the appropriate training, doctrine and force structure adjustments before history repeats itself on the Airland Battlefield.

Field Manual 100-5 defines the Airland Battle as one battle with three parts; deep, close-in and rear. The battle extends from our rear areas, across the forward line of troops, and deep into the enemy's second echelon or rear areas. Current operations in one area will normally impact on future operations in other areas. The doctrine places significant emphasis on depths: attacking the enemy throughout the full depth of his formations is seen as the key to defeating a

numerically superior force. The current Army focus on the light division also supports this concept. The light divisions can be used in heavily forested terrain or in the sprawling urban area of Europe, in order to free up the mechanized forces to strike deep.

However, the underlying theme in the doctrine has been one of how to best use scarce tactical resources on the battlefield to ensure that we win. Certainly the Military Police Corps is no exception. The military police have the following battlefield missions:

- o Battlefield circulation control (BCC).
- o Rear area combat operations (RACO).
- o EPW operations.

Battlefield circulation control remains the primary mission of the military police in combat. If we accept the concept that the heavy divisions are to maneuver and the light divisions are to delay, their supply missions must receive rapid priority on all Major Supply Routes (MSR's). It is the function of the military police to expedite the forward movement of combat resources to the commanders. This will be a difficult task requiring rigid control of movements over restricted road networks, often while under enemy attack. Obviously, the Airland Battle will be one of constant movement. In addition to the deep attack doctrine, many forward-deployed units will be moving to their fighting locations while other units will arrive in theater, with personnel arriving at aerial ports and equipment arriving at seaports, and then link up and move to their respective battle positions. This fluid situation will place heavy demands on the military police at all echelons.

RACO OPERATIONS

Soviet doctrine stresses decisive engagements to the entire depths of the enemy positions which are followed up with large-scale assaults by ground force formations on the European mainland. The war will open with a very heavy blow to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ground forces, aimed at shattering their cohesion in the first hours and days of the war. They will penetrate into our rear to destroy high priority targets: nuclear weapons and delivery systems; command, control and communication elements; reserves and reinforcements, and the supply chain. The aim will be to bring about a sudden and rapid collapse of the military infrastructure of NATO.[1]

Enemy activity in the rear area is expressed in three levels of intensity:

LEVEL I

- o Enemy controlled agents activity.
- o Sabotage by enemy sympathizers.
- o Terrorism.

LEVEL II

- o Diversionary and sabotage operations conducted by unconventional forces.
- o Raid, ambush, and reconnaissance operations conducted by combat units.
- o Special missions or unconventional warfare missions.

LEVEL III

- o Heliborne operations.
- o Airborne operations.

- o Amphibious operations.
- o Ground force deliberate operations.
- o Infiltration operations.

The three levels do not infer that one level precedes another. The rear area may face one or all actions at one time.[2]

Securing the rear area is critical to the success of the Airland Battle doctrine. Military police are called upon to provide the combat link in the rear battle. Depending on the nature and size of the enemy force, rear area operations are conducted by three different types of organizations; base cluster units, military police units, and tactical combat units. The base cluster commander must establish necessary defensive measures to ensure the security of his unit and must be capable of protecting itself against Level I incursions. In cases of Levels II and III attacks, the base cluster unit engages enemy forces and delays them until reinforcing military police or a tactical combat force arrives and assists in defeating the incursions.

The Airland Battle doctrine visualizes the employment of combat military police units throughout the rear area which provides the commander with a light mobile force to affect the rear battle. They conduct combat operations to counter the enemy with aggressive patrolling and surveillance of potential avenues of approach, landing zones, or drop zones. Military police provide early warning of rear area enemy activity. Their firepower, mobility, and communication assets give them the capability to identify, intercept, and destroy small enemy forces before the enemy can close on their objectives. In essence, the military police respond to defeat Level I and Level II enemy attacks that are beyond the capability of the base cluster forces.

If the enemy incursion is battalion size or larger, the military police respond to determine the size and apparent intent of the enemy force. This Level III attack will most likely require a tactical combat response force to defeat it. If necessary, the military police may be placed OPCON to the tactical force until the battle is completed.

EPW OPERATIONS

The military police combat functions cannot be performed simultaneously. Rather, they must be prioritized based on considerations of mission, enemy capabilities, terrain characteristics and weather, troops available, and time available (METT-T). Furthermore, in an Airland Battle scenario, there will be a significant number of EPW's captured by NATO forces. This will place a tremendous burden on tactical forces and their commanders. For this reason, adequate plans for handling large numbers of prisoners must be made now so that the problem does not threaten the success on the Airland Battlefield. In almost every war in which the United States has been involved, EPW operations have assumed the dimension of an afterthought. Commanders tend to underestimate capture rates, resulting in an unexpected burden on the entire force structure with an adverse effect on combat operations. This unexpected burden is even more critical considering the operational concept of attacking the enemy throughout the full depth of his formations. When confronted with a large number of EPW's, the most obvious solution may be simply to disarm the Soviet unit, abandon it and continue to attack. However, under these circumstances, the commander cannot maintain the momentum of the attack

because he is legally obligated, and held responsible, for the security and accountability of all captured EPW's.[3]

Certainly no combat commander would willingly permit himself to remain encumbered with EPW's, furthermore, there is every incentive to secure EPW evacuation to the next higher command as soon as possible. But the evacuation of EPW's requires manpower for guards, and perhaps transportation; valuable resources that the commander probably will not be able to spare.

Guarding and transporting EPW's often drain the fighting strength and supplies of combat units at a critical time. The longer enemy prisoners are left in the hands of emotionally charged soldiers engaged in the fighting and seeing their fellow soldiers killed or injured, the greater the risk of war crimes being committed. For this reason, the rapid transfer of captured EPW's to military police for rapid evacuation out of the combat zone is essential.

Under the provisions of the Geneva Convention, a capturing power is responsible, from the moment of capture, for the proper and humane treatment of all EPW's. In accordance with FM 19-40, capturing troops should be familiar with the five S's concerning EPW's. They are:

- o Segregate--by rank, sex, nationality.
- o Search--for weapons, military documents, or equipment in the vicinity of capture.
- o Speed--evacuate from point of capture.
- o Silence--prohibit talking among EPW for ease of control.
- o Safeguard--to prevent harm or escape.[4]

This is a difficult task for any commander who has the crucial mission of striking deep or preparing to attack. EPW operations are

equally difficult for military police units that are also conducting rear area combat operations.

Military police units receive EPW's from capturing troops as far forward as possible. For example, prisoners captured in the Main Battle Area are usually brought to a division EPW collecting point in a brigade trains area. There is normally only one squad of military police to operate the collecting point. Seriously wounded prisoners are placed in medical channels while the remainder are evacuated to the division central EPW collecting point. Division military police, normally a platoon, go to the division EPW collecting points, pick up prisoners, and escort them to the division rear. The division central EPW collecting point serves as a one stop pick up point in the division areas for military police guards coming from corps to pick up prisoners. This evacuation process is continued through echelons above corps.[5]

Obviously, the size of the collecting points will depend upon the capture rate and numbers of detained persons. The forward EPW collecting point must be capable of easy displacement due to the changes in the tactical situation. The division central EPW collecting point will be located near MSR's for quick evacuation. If it is not within the capability of the division military police to operate collecting points throughout the division and also perform other required missions, they must request augmentation of personnel.

The rapid evacuation of EPW from the division to corps requires a great deal of planning. The task of adequately supporting large-scale EPW operations with supplies, medical care, and transportation is immense. According to FM 19-40, the providing of sufficient rations is the responsibility of the echelon having custody of the EPW. To the

greatest extent possible, captured enemy rations and other enemy supplies and materials are used. In addition, orders must be given in the language that the EPW understand. The number of military police guards required depend on such factors as the morale, physical condition, mode of transportation, terrain, number of EPW's, and the probability of enemy attack.[6]

The military police support in the light division is austere to say the least. There are no direct support platoons in the brigades to operate the forward division EPW collecting points. This traditional military police responsibility must be absorbed by the maneuver brigades. Doctrine also requires further augmentation from the division band to assist in operating the division central EPW collecting point. When the division receives heavy demand for additional military police support, augmentation from corps units will be required. Prioritization of military police support in the light division, especially relating to EPW operations, will be crucial during the initial stages of combat.

As combat operations extend beyond 48 hours, the division rear area may become much larger and exceed the organic military police capability to provide support. If the division military police assets are performing BCC and RACO, the corps military police will have to conduct EPW operations in the division area of operations.

The corps military police brigade commander is also responsible for the operation of the corps EPW holding area and for providing required EPW escort guard support to divisions for evacuation purposes. The holding areas are operated on an austere basis and should be designed to meet the minimum requirements for the temporary retention of EPW's pending their further evacuation to the COMMZ.

Prior planning and reconnaissance should provide for the selection or construction of a suitable facility for the temporary internment of large numbers of EPW. As a minimum, such a facility should be located in the proximity of an MSR and preferably near a major transportation terminal. The holding area should have an adequate water supply and shelter to provide protection from the elements. Evacuation should be accomplished by using any available backhaul transportation, ground or air.[7]

In essence, the military police brigade commander's EPW operations include all measures taken to ensure humane treatment, accountability, collection, and prompt evacuation. Also, based on the considerations of METT-T, he must conduct battlefield circulation control and rear area combat operations for the entire corps.

With the exception of the 22d Military Police Detachment, located at Fort McClellan, Alabama, 100 percent of the EPW force structure above corps level is in the Army Reserve or the National Guard. The absence of active duty EPW units during previous conflicts has caused tremendous problems for tactical commanders.

EPW OPERATIONS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It has often been said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to relive it. Most of the EPW problems encountered during WWII and Korea were linked to insufficient planning, resulting in combat units being diverted to escort and guard enemy prisoners of war. EPW operations in Vietnam were advisory in nature since EPW's captured by US forces were released to the host nation, the Army of the Republic of

Vietnam. EPW operations in Grenada did reveal some logistical and training shortcomings.

In almost every EPW operation during WWII, the demands were far in excess of the resources available. Never before had the United States Army had prisoners of war in its own custody in such numbers. The doctrinal system of evacuating EPW's from division collecting points to Army prisoner of war enclosures could not be maintained because of the large number of divisions, the lack of transportation for evacuation, and the rapid advance of the allied forces.

According to the third US Army's after action report, they processed 765,483 EPW's from 1 August 1944 through 8 May 1945. The allotment of military police units for this huge operation was inadequate. Upon their arrival in France, efforts were made to get military police escort guard companies. None were available in the theater, so military police units were reinforced with field artillery and tank destroyer battalions.[8]

Every effort was made by each echelon of command to relieve the next lower echelon of command of its prisoners of war with the least delay. Divisions were practically unanimous in the opinion that a higher echelon should evacuate EPW's from division collecting points. A major reason for this rationale was that division military police personnel were lost when they were escorting EPW's to corps or Army enclosures.

The Third Army's after-action report also showed that the movement of EPW's to the rear was closely associated with the movement of supplies to the front. There was no transportation specifically provided in tables of organization and equipment for the movement of

EPW's; thus, transportation had to be diverted from other missions. In most cases, empty supply vehicles and trains were the only means of transportation that could be relied upon to be available daily over long periods of operation. In order to use supply transportation to evacuate EPW's most efficiently, it was necessary for collecting points and enclosures to be established along the MSR's at supply points. At times, Army enclosures were located sufficiently close to division collecting points so as to make it economical in personnel and transportation for divisions to evacuate EPW's directly to the enclosure.

Sick and wounded prisoners of war were evacuated through normal medical channels in the same manner as were our own sick and wounded. However, walking wounded EPW's were evacuated through the military police EPW evacuation channels.

Although military police escort guard companies were initially planned for field forces in operation "Overlord," none were made available to the armies; all such companies were assigned to the communications zone. This inadequacy forced the use of many combat troops into the service of evacuating prisoners of war.

In order to relieve the combat troops of the problems of guarding, feeding, and housing EPW's in the active theaters of operations, the War Department adopted the policy of transferring captured EPW's to the continental United States. The military police manpower problems were immense. For example, after the Normandy invasion, 19 military police escort guard companies were assigned to the theater. They were used to guard EPW enclosures and serve as ship guards across the ocean. An additional 15 companies were sent to England and 6 remained in the

United States, receiving the EPW's at the ports and guarding them on their way to EPW base camps.[9]

In Korea, even though the United Nations Command included troop units of many different nations, the responsibility for EPW operations was assumed by the American portion of the command. Procedures developed in WWII were used in the handling and evacuating EPW's from the combat zone. During the course of the Korean War, 171,494 communist prisoners were captured and detained by United Nation forces, 95 percent of whom were taken during the first year of the fighting.[10]

The United Nations Command was not prepared to deal with masses of communist troops who carried the battlefield into the prisoner camps. In December 1950, 135,000 EPW's captured in the Pusan region were a direct and severe threat to the security of United Nation's forces. Once again, major combat units were diverted to handle EPW operations.[11]

During this initial period of intense overcrowding in existing prisoner of war facilities, EPW's were under minimum guard with practically no close supervision. The communist leaders within the prisoner population soon began to organize open revolts and refusals to obey orders. At times, it became necessary to use troops in the compounds at Koje-do Island to restore order. They were often met by fanatical communists, using primitive weapons, who demonstrated a total disregard for their own safety. Intimidation and terror were the order of the day in an effort to enforce obedience to the communist leaders' orders and plans.

Intelligence efforts and captured documents have revealed that by the time the Armistice talks commenced at Panmunjom, highly organized

political and military units had been installed within nearly all United Nations command EPW facilities. The treatment of EPW's was not only an issue at the conference table, but was also seized upon by the communists for a world-wide propaganda campaign to discredit the United Nations command. The communists had assigned their best intelligence and propaganda specialists to the Armistice talks.

The communist conspiracy to overthrow the United Nations control of EPW camps was defeated by stern action. Force was met with overwhelming force by the use of combat troops, and equipment withdrawn from combat for that purpose. The overcrowded camps were broken up into enclosures of manageable size and hard-core communists were screened and segregated. The damage done to the United Nation's command's effectiveness by siphoning off effort from combat at the front, and loss of prestige at the conference table, is impossible to estimate.

The military board investigating EPW operations during the Korean War concluded that the problems encountered were linked to "insufficient" preplanning due to the perception of commanders that the war would be short and that EPW operations in previous wars could provide the basis for planning.[12] Had sufficient trained personnel been provided and facilities made available, policies and procedures developed in WWII for the handling and treatment of EPW's would have been adequate. Finally, mobilization plans must provide for a sufficient number of military police and escort guard companies.

In Vietnam, all EPW's captured by US Forces were retained in US channels until released to an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Prisoner of War Camp, ARVN hospital, or an established interrogation center. EPW's were normally escorted by 18th Military Police Brigade

security guards from the division collection point to an ARVN prisoner of war camp. A US Army Military Police Advisory Team was assigned to each of these camps to assist the Vietnamese camp commanders and to ensure that EPW's were treated as required by the Geneva Convention.

During the initial phases of operation "URGENT FURY" in Grenada, EPW operations and security missions frequently exceeded the capabilities of both division and corps military police forces. According to the "URGENT FURY" after action report, the number of EPW's also exceeded the intelligence estimate. Consequently, XVIII Airborne Corps attached the 118th Military Police Company to the 82d Airborne Division to assist in the processing of 1,300 Cuban and Peoples Revolutionary Army (PRA) detainees.[13]

The division military police were initially tasked to logistically support the EPW mission. Since operating a holding area is normally a corps function, there were problems with facilities, sanitation, and security. Significant training shortfalls were identified in both capturing troops and military police. The after action report recommended that all military police units receive additional training on EPW processing and accountability procedures. It was further recommended that a "Prepared/Cage EPW Camp" be established and palletized for future deployment.

HOST NATION SUPPORT

There is no national policy concerning the transfer of prisoners of war to another detaining power. In World War II prisoners were kept under United States control. The United States also controlled most of the EPW's in the Korean conflict but they were under the auspices of the

United Nations Command. The only instances where prisoners captured by United States forces have been released to another government were in Vietnam and Grenada.

The Secretary of the Army is the Department of Defense's (DOD) agent for the DOD enemy prisoner of war program. Therefore, the Department of the Army should seek a basic decision from the Departments of State and Defense concerning a policy on the transfer of EPW's to Host Nations (HN). The policy should state whether the preferred course of action is the United States retention of custody or transfer.

Using host nation support to perform military police functions in lieu of US Army military police units and personnel in wartime, depends on the nature of the task and the ability of the HN to provide the necessary support. Normally, no HN assigns the broad spectrum of law enforcement, security, EPW, and combat skills to a branch as does the US Army to military police units. For example, the German military police (Feldjaeger) are not responsible for enemy prisoners of war operations.

For planning purposes, the closer to the fighting a function is performed, the less likely it will be performed by host nation support. Consequently, host nation support at division and corps level may be of limited value. In a conflict where EPW's must be kept in the theater, guarding, supporting, and defending them can still be an enormous drain on the entire theater's personnel and logistical resources. If HN support is to be used in EPW operations, plans need to be agreed upon as early as possible in order to provide time for inclusion in the mobilization planning of the nations concerned. The capability of the HN to accomplish the mission must also be carefully evaluated.

SUMMARY

The major thrust of this essay was to demonstrate that military police units supporting divisions and corps are not resourced to perform all three combat military police missions at the same time on a sustained basis. Regardless of which mission has priority, there appears to be a significant shortfall in the force structure and capability of the corps and division military police units.

The potential for large numbers of EPW's obligates military planners to review historical data on the subject. An awareness of the impact that EPW operations could have on the success of the Airland Battle doctrine would go a long way in reducing the possible adverse effects on future tactical operations. This essay has surveyed a few historical examples. Given the potential capture rates, the additional military police missions, and the locations of many EPW military police units in the reserve components, would the support in the future really be available when and where it was needed? It hasn't in the past!

The magnitude of rear area combat operations clearly exceeds the capability of the military police under most future scenarios. With a large rear area, MSR's will be extended. This will require more military police assets for battlefield circulation control to provide security of routes and facilities. Military police doctrine may very well stress aggressive RACO missions, but the realities of the force structure will, in all likelihood, restrict the bulk of their activities to expediting the forward movement of combat resources and evacuating EPW's from the battle area.

If the US Army is serious in its doctrine to synchronize combat operations into a single coordinated effort, perhaps we should consider giving the RACO mission to the light infantry division. The light division is organized for employment against light enemy forces or combat against medium to heavy forces in close terrain. The division is well organized for rapid and immediate combat operations against any level threat in the rear area.

The US Army has never had to fight a truly significant rear area battle in the 20th Century. During recent REFORGER exercises, US Special Forces and Ranger units have had little difficulty in neutralizing the NATO base cluster system. Most combat support and combat service support units in the rear are committed to supporting the forward combat units and are not adequately trained or equipped to defend themselves under the base cluster system.

In an effort to allow the current Army rear battle doctrine to be effective, EPW operations are often ignored. It is difficult to recall when the last time a large-scale EPW mission was inserted into a REFORGER exercise. This general lack of interest is worrisome when examined in light of the historical examples set forth in this essay. Whatever the reason, the EPW problem should be approached as would any other major battlefield threat.

The military police corps can best support the Airland Battle by training for battlefield circulation control and enemy prisoner of war missions. There are many historical examples of where the combat initiative was lost because of the diversion of battlefield resources to support EPW operations. Unless the Army takes the appropriate training

initiative, writes doctrine, and makes force structure adjustments to deal with EPW operations, history may repeat itself on the Airland Battlefield.

ENDNOTES

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